One Last Sermon

Reynolds, church part ways over stance on gays

By PAUL ASAY
THE GAZETTE

It happens in a breath.

Breathe in, and the 45-year-old Rev. Benjamin Reynolds is a statesman, his baritone voice rolling across the 500 congregants at Emmanuel Missionary Baptist Church like the tide: words measured and eloquent, diction perfect.

Breathe out, and Reynolds' voice contorts with effort and emotion — stormy, raspy and raw. He's preaching now, hands gesturing, knees bent, sweat trickling down his brow and cheeks.

"In this life, everybody's been shot! Everybody's bleeding!" he hollers, clutching the red-tipped microphone. "You can't stop now! You gotta keep on living!"

It was a bleeding Reynolds who spoke to a bleeding Emmanuel Baptist on Sunday — Reynolds' last day in a pulpit he occupied for nearly 16 years.

In September, his relationship with the church changed in a breath: He told his church he was gay Sept. 29, announcing his resignation at the same time. His last day was to have been Dec. 31. Emmanuel's board said no: You'll leave in a month.

But, in their final service together, Reynolds and the congregation shared a last embrace. Congregants crowded into pews, sitting shoulder to shoulder to sing, clap and shout — for God, and for the man who helped bring God to them for so long.

"Some folks think that we're parting (because) one is good and the other is bad," Reynolds thundered from the pulpit. "The God I serve is God over us all!"

LONG-LASTING DEVOTION

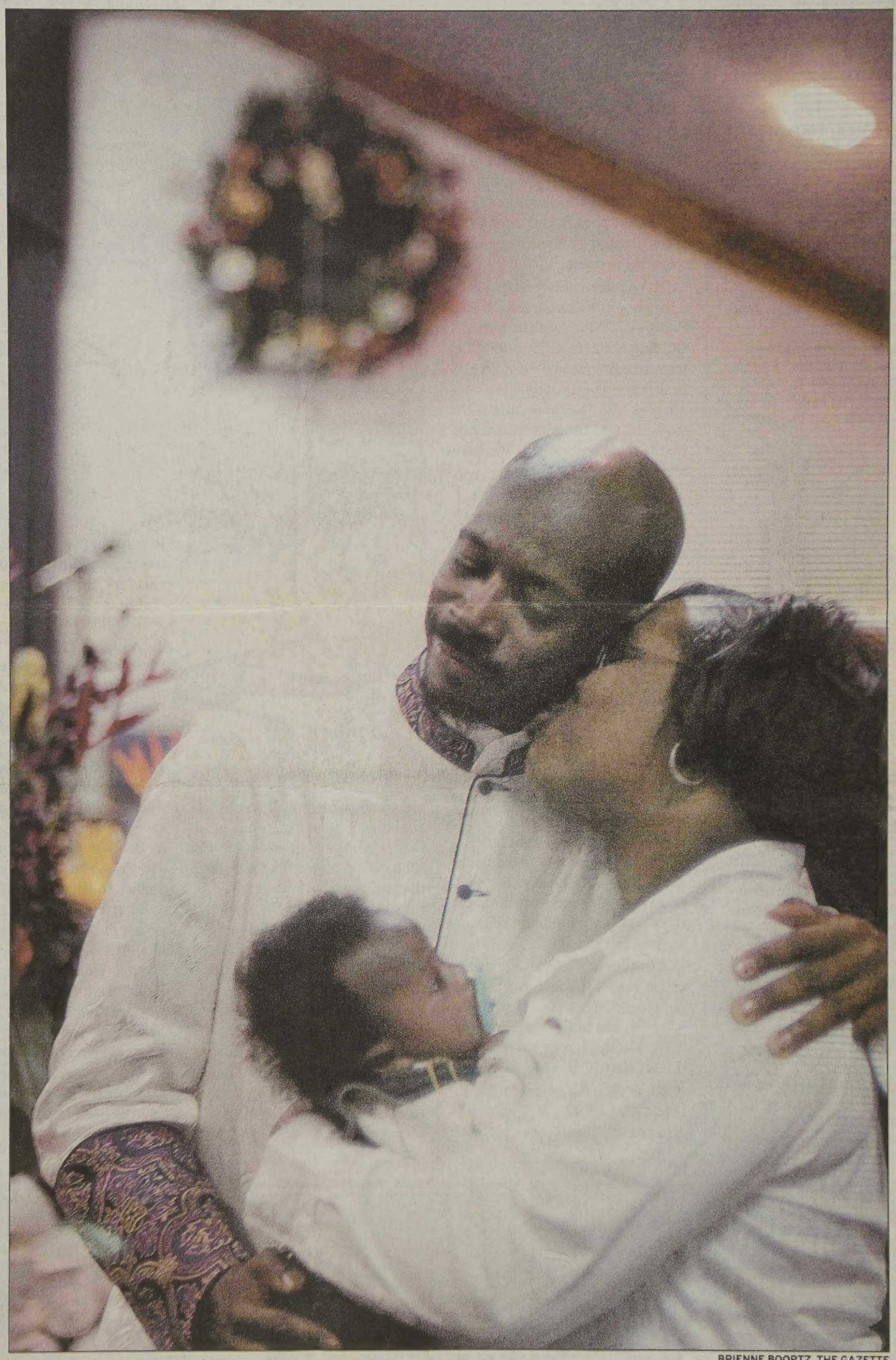
Reynolds grew up in Emmanuel Baptist. His parents are still members, and he started preaching there when he was 14. Childhood friend ReNai Frisco said that back then Reynolds was a "borderline nerd."

Frisco marvels at the man Reynolds is now: eloquent preacher, fearless leader, honorable man. She believes God shaped him that way, preparing Reynolds for "massively wonderful things."

He became one of Colorado Springs' most visible civil-rights champions, serving as president of the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People from 2003 to 2005. Under Reynolds' leadership, Emmanuel remained one of Colorado Springs' most influential black churches, boasting 500 members and dozens of ministries including a prison outreach, HIV/AIDS ministry and a scholarship program.

"For many of us, he was Emmanuel," said member Sheila Scott.

SEE REYNOLDS • PAGE 5



BRIENNE BOORTZ, THE GAZETTE

The Rev. Benjamin Reynolds said goodbye Sunday to church member Tasara Fudge and her son, Kariim, 2 months, at the end of his final service preaching at Emmanuel Missionary Baptist Church. Reynolds announced Sept. 29 that he is gay and would resign.

BED-AND-BREAKFAST TIPS

Make guests comfortable

ot guests coming for the holidays? Here e some tips on being a good host, courte- of Jan DuBoise, who owns a bed-and- eakfast in Wisconsin, and her sister Mary Cyr, a caterer who shares kitchen duty.

"The No. 1 thing is to be flexi- e to the needs of your guests," DuBoise ys. "You need to read between the lines hat your guests want."

A good host should develop a ough outer skin and realize not ev- yone is going to like the food you might epare. Also, make sure to ask whether ests have an allergy to certain foods.

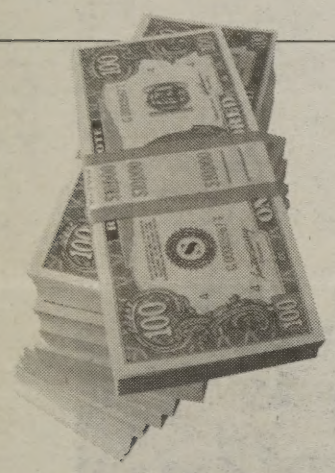
Put out coffee or tea in the morn- g with homemade bread or muffins for arly risers. Homemade cookies are also a ce touch for snack attacks.

Fresh flowers in the guest oom are a thoughtful touch. "I think it ind of sets the mood," DuBoise says.

When it comes to guest bed- ooms, try ironing the sheets for a re- reshing change. "When you get in a bed hat has been ironed, it feels totally differ- nt," DuBoise says.

"People notice the linens and eautiful towels. So splurge a little bit," St. yr says. "You give your guests the best hings you have in your home."

THE (APPLETON, WIS.) POST-CRESCENT



CONSIDER HEIRS

Manage money for long term

Nike had it right – just do it, says Ted Ridle- nuber about financial and estate planning.

The author of "Affluent for Life" says the biggest enemy of wealth management is procrastination because it can ultimately affect not only an individual's finances, but those of his or her heirs.

The most critical action, he said, is invest- ment planning.

Most of the other issues involve getting your estate in order – having a will, assign- ng an executor and contingent executor nd setting up trusts to protect your heirs rom estate taxes.

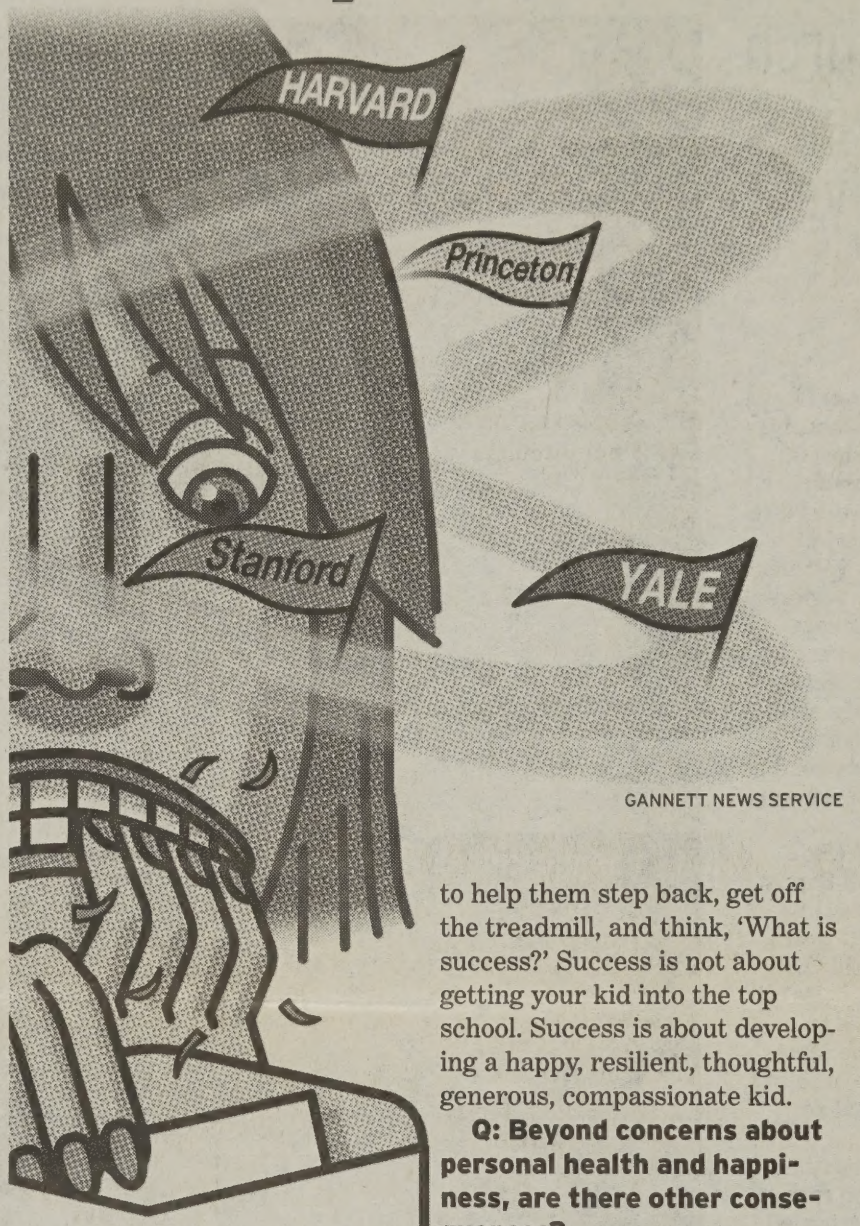
For more information about "Affluent for ife," go online to www.bookmasters. om/marktplc/01615.htm.

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

OVERSCHEDULED AND UNDER PRESSURE

Need to succeed can stultify teens

By MARY BETH MARKLEIN
USA TODAY



GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

The American Academy of Pediatrics warns that today's overscheduled lifestyle is robbing children of the developmental benefits of play. It also cites pressures created by the college-admissions process.

The academy discusses this in a new book, "Less Stress, More Success: A New Approach to Guiding Your Teen Through College Admissions and Beyond." Elaborating on the topic are coauthors Marilee Jones, admissions dean at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and pediatrician Kenneth Ginsburg.

Question: Why the extra focus on college admissions?

Jones: It can be a big driver. Many of us in college admissions have set standards that are so high, and we've been sending the message that kids need to be perfect. We get rewarded by U.S. News rankings for admitting those kids, and as a result we're caught up in it. The other piece is that we have a tendency to want kids to look alike. We want them to take so many AP classes, we fixate on the scores, and oh, by the way, they should have so many activities and they should also be leaders. They get headaches, or migraines, or stomach problems — all the classic signs of stress — because the adults in their world are holding them to such a high standard.

Ginsburg: College admissions is just one of the factors that is pushing kids too fast too soon to grow up, but unlike, say, poverty, it's one of the forces we can address easily.

Q: Where do parents fit into all of this?

Jones: Parents are a big problem, covertly and overtly. There are some parents who want their kids to win no matter what. And that means getting into a top-tier school. The majority of parents, though, want to do the right thing for their kids. But they look at neighbors and at other parents, and they worry that if they just let their child grow whatever way their child happens to grow, that somehow they'll be failing their child.

Ginsburg: It's also important to note that there are no villains here. Most parents absolutely have the best intention of helping their child succeed. We're trying to help them step back, get off the treadmill, and think, 'What is success?' Success is not about getting your kid into the top school. Success is about developing a happy, resilient, thoughtful, generous, compassionate kid.

Q: Beyond concerns about personal health and happiness, are there other consequences?

Jones: From my perspective at MIT, I have deep fears about the future of innovation. I don't see as much individual creativity anymore among applicants. They're so busy, they don't have a chance to daydream. They're just moving from activity to activity to activity to try to satisfy the needs of all the adults in their lives. The Thomas Edisons of the nation, the individuals who will change the world, I don't see that. And that has dire consequences for our nation's ability to compete.

Ginsburg: Every great innovation was preceded by many failures. It has to be OK to not do well in your first 30 attempts.

BE COMPUTER SMART

Keep kids safe by monitoring online activity

According to news reports, a teenage boy remarked in an instant message to former U.S. Rep. Mark Foley that his mother was "computer dumb."

In light of the scandal involving Foley, it pays to heed this advice: "Parents can't afford to be computer dumb," says John Dacey, a professor of developmental psychology at Boston College and author of "The Safe Child Handbook."

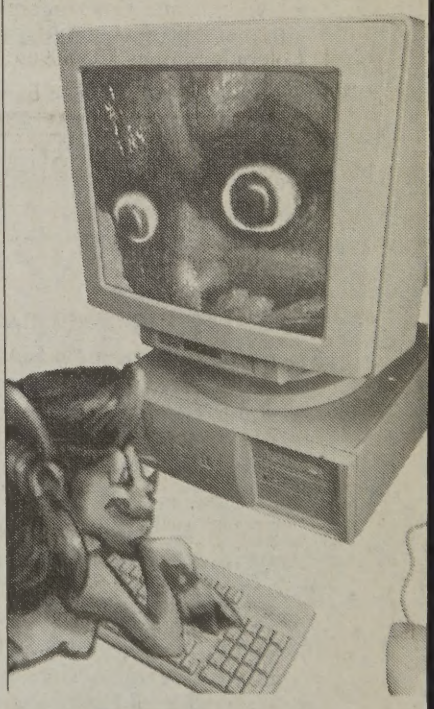
Parents can't eliminate every danger, but Dacey and other experts say there are things you can do to lessen your child's chance of getting into trouble online.

- **Get involved** with your kids' Internet activities. Know what's on their MySpace profile and know who they're chatting with.
- **Keep computers in a public area** of the house, not in a child's bedroom.
- **Be able to match every screen name** on a child's instant-message buddy list to a person he knows.
- **Any adult** on a child's or teenager's buddy list merits investigation. "Whether it's a congressman or a teacher or a coach or anybody, you ask, 'What do you talk about? What is he asking you?'" Dacey said. "If it sounds even a little bit strange, find out more."
- **Know your children's passwords** and screen names. When you pass by the computer, glance at the screen. And every so often, check the computer's cache to see what Web sites your child has been visiting.

Some kids may balk at what they feel is a lack of trust, said Lt. T.K. Bridges, head of Wichita-Sedgwick County's (Kan.) Exploited and Missing Children Unit. But rules are rules, said Bridges, who has two teenagers.

"I tell my son: 'I'm not trying to infringe on those private matters for you. But as a parent it's my job to keep you safe,'" he said.

McCLATCHY-TRIBUNE NEWSPAPERS



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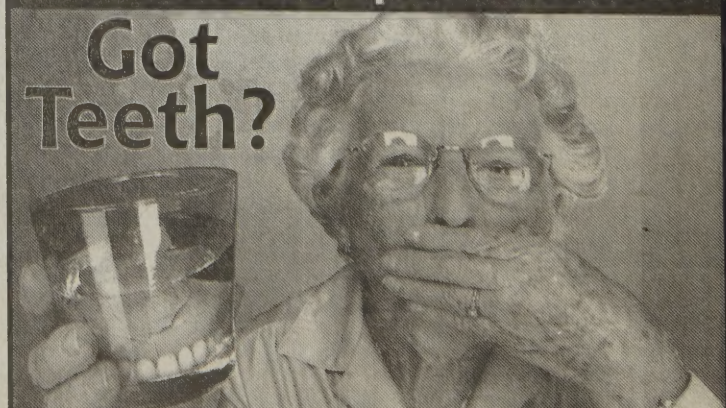


REYNOLDS: Led 'Sexuality' series

FROM PAGE 1

But Reynolds was privately dealing with his sexuality. He knew he was a same-gender-loving man, (the preferred term for the word "gay" among blacks, according to Rosemary Harris, current president of the NAACP) and he knew that ran counter to what many black churches teach.

"For 45 years, I have tried to tell the world who I am," he said. It was a painful and frightening story to tell.

The hardest part, he said, was telling his parents. Several times he got in the car to drive to their house and tell them, and several times he couldn't do it. He finally made the journey.

A THEOLOGICAL DIVIDE

Social justice — feeding the poor, helping the oppressed and championing civil rights — is a pillar of the black church.

That advocacy, however, doesn't typically extend to gay rights. Though black churches run the gamut on how they treat sexual issues, the Rev. Promise Lee, pastor for Relevant Word Ministries in Colorado Springs, said most teach that homosexuality is a sin.

"The bigger question is not what the black church's or white church's position has been regarding homosexuality," Lee said, "but what the Bible says in regard to the behavior, and how we are to respond to it. That is where the line is drawn."

Reynolds feels that God made him gay and a preacher, too. So, to do one he hid the other, even from his parents. It was a stressful path — one that left him pondering whether the best way to deal with it all would be to "jump out a window, or take a pill or whatever."

"There has been a constant struggle," Reynolds said.

He became an advocate for the rights of gays and lesbians. He officially welcomed homosexuals into the life of the church and taught a series called "The Black Church and Sexuality," which, in part, examined how black congregations sometimes discriminate against gays.

His stance didn't sit well with all his congregants. Some walked out of his services because of those positions. Some never returned.

Reynolds said it was the congregation's opposition to his advocacy for gays and lesbians — not his own sexual orientation — that convinced him it was time to leave.

But he wanted to tell them who he was, come clean with them. He wanted to put a face on issues such as homosexuality and Referendum I, which would give same-sex couples certain legal rights. He wanted to show them that it's possible to be a faithful servant to God and be gay, too.

Telling the congregation at Emmanuel was hard and, when it was done, the fallout was severe. Deacon Kevin Hagans said congregants reacted in myriad ways, from full support to outright anger. He said the majority, though, felt Reynolds' views on sexuality and the church's were simply incompatible.

Some congregants said it was just time to move on.

"We love this man," Caron Allen said. "But I think we're at a time where he had done all he could do for us."

Frisco, Reynolds' childhood friend, said that in her opinion the church rushed to judgment too quickly.

"I would say that Pastor Reynolds has taken us as far as he's been permitted to take us, which speaks to our sad state of intolerance," she said. "Pastor Reynolds is not defined by his sexuality, but is defined by the fact that he is a man hand-selected by God."

Frisco said Reynolds' final service was very painful — for her, for Reynolds, for most in the church.

BLEEDING TOGETHER

That pain was shelved for the service.

The place was packed, congregants sitting and singing with a smattering of visitors. Local NAACP President Rosemary Harris was there. So was former Colorado Springs mayor Mary Lou Makepeace. Some members from other local churches came to show their support.

They voiced their approval as Reynolds preached — "Amen," "You tell it, brother" — and some stood up when Reynolds hit home.

"You can't let a little bump in the road keep you down," Reynolds said during his sermon. "You gotta keep on going."

This was no maudlin goodbye: Rarely was Reynolds' departure mentioned during the service, and the opening prayer implored that the service focus "not about the pastor, not about (the church), but on you, heavenly Father."

But Reynolds' sermon delved into their mutual pain: Suffering can bring about transformation. We must push through the pain to a brighter future.

"He's certainly one of a kind," Makepeace said. "This morning was so powerful, so brilliant."

When the service ended, a line formed leading from Reynolds to the back of the church, congregants waiting to say goodbye to their pastor.

"I've not lost sight of my faith," Reynolds said in an earlier interview. "If anything, this has increased my faith. I owe a great debt of gratitude to the Emmanuel Church for forcing me to struggle with my issues."

The pain lingers and questions remain.

Reynolds is taking doctorate-level theology courses. He may return to the pulpit one day, but his future, for now, is uncertain.

"This is a very controversial time in my life," Reynolds said. "People are watching me to make sure I keep my Christian integrity."

The church will continue, too, despite losing the leader it's been so closely identified with. Emmanuel Baptist held a meeting Monday to create a plan to find its new pastor.

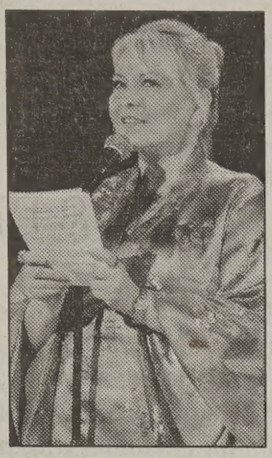
Dozens of ministries will push on, and the church will move forward. As Reynolds said, you gotta keep on living, keep on breathing.

CONTACT THE WRITER: 636-0367 or paul.asay@gazette.com

TV | BEST BETS

"48 Hours Mystery" A mother believes police are wrong about her son's role in a homicide case (9 p.m., CBS).

"Roseanne Barr: Blonde and Bitchin'" A standup comedy special from Barr (11 p.m., HBO).



SUNDAY'S HIGHLIGHTS

"60 Minutes" Dismantling ships in Bangladesh; a congressman's fight against pork; a profile of Russell Crowe (6 p.m., CBS).

"The Simpsons" "Treehouse of Horror XVII" Homer gets consumed by the Blob, Bart discovers the Golem of Prague in Krusty's closet, and a flashback to Springfield panicked by "War of the Worlds" (7 p.m., Sunday, Fox).

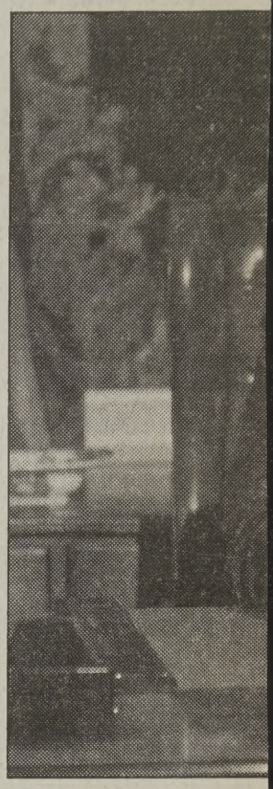
"Nature" Season premiere: The venerable nature show begins its 25th season with "Chimpanzees: An Unnatural History," looking at how humans have exploited our closest primate cousin (8 p.m., Sunday, PBS).

"Desperate Housewives" A supermarket hostage crisis unfolds. Felicity Huffman stars (8 p.m., ABC).

'SNL' rock g

Hammond may revive classic Clinton shtick

By VERNE GAY
NEWSDAY



He's survived creative redirections and misdirections, sidestepped cast purges (a recent one) and the more civilized cast "departures."

The president who made him famous — and perhaps in some small measure he helped to make famous, too — has been out of office six years. Yet both remain indelibly linked: The real McCoy still seems only barely distinguishable from his comic doppelganger.

Yes, Mister Darrell Hammond, this is your life.

Hammond gets his very own "Saturday Night Live" special (10:35 p.m. today on NBC), practically on the eve of the Tuesday midterms.

So one can reasonably ask: What's taken so long?

For 11 seasons — some glorious, some unspeakable — he's been the rock of "SNL," the One Sure Thing, with a few exceptions. (He still can't figure out W, and enough already with Chris Matthew Hartman and Dana pretty much no or formed the art of i than Hammond on tainly no one for as l

In one of those

Other shoe drops for 'Kidnapped'

The writing was on the wall for "Kidnapped" when NBC moved the underperforming drama from Wednesday to Saturday nights. Now even the wall is gone.

The network has pulled "Kidnapped" from its schedule for good, adding to the trail of failed serialized dramas in the 2006-07 season. NBC does, however, plan to air the remaining eight episodes of the show online at NBC.com.

Despite a big-name cast and reasonably positive reviews, audiences didn't go for the show. After "Kidnapped" averaged less than 7 million viewers per week in its original timeslot, NBC shipped the drama to Saturdays, where its overall audience dropped to about 4 million, with similarly anemic numbers among adults 18 to 49.

Repeats of "Law & Order: Criminal Intent" will fill the 8 p.m. Saturday spot for at least the next three weeks. There's no word yet on when the remaining "Kidnapped" episodes will appear online.

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